

DRAFT:BMK:11/6/69

Richard B. Steinmetz, Jr., Vice-President of Anaconda Aluminum Company, issued the following statement today:

In view of the increasing emotionalism which has been displayed in recent statements concerning conditions in and around Columbia Falls, it seems in order to try to restore some element of rationality to the situation. Perhaps a good starting point would be to recite the declaration of policy contained in the Clean Air Act of Montana, which is as follows:

"It is hereby declared to be the public policy of this state and the purpose of this act to achieve and maintain such levels of air quality as will protect human health and safety, and to the greatest degree practicable, prevent injury to plant and animal life and property, foster the comfort and convenience of the people, promote the economic and social development of this state and facilitate the enjoyment of the natural attractions of this state."

The act is intended, the section just quoted concludes, "to provide a framework within which all values may be balanced in the public interest."

How does the present situation in Columbia Falls measure up to the basic policy aims of the governing law? Let's consider them:

1. Human health and safety. Anaconda Aluminum Company states emphatically that there is no threat whatever to human health and safety, and is unaware of any informed opinion to the contrary.
2. Injury to plant and animal life and property. One of the unfortunate aspects of the plant's location is the existence in the area of several species of evergreens which are peculiarly sensitive to fluorides. Much has been learned on this subject of sensitivity of different trees and plants since the early 1950s, when the company's site selection decision was made. It has only been since the company's recently expanded production that levels have reached the point where adverse effects have occurred. At the same time, it is quite clear to experts brought into the area by the company, as well as to Forest Service personnel familiar with conditions, that the last several years, with their periods of drought, extreme cold and insect infestations have had a definite impact on trees, not in Columbia Falls alone but throughout the state. These are facts which are known to that small group with shrill voices whose interests would not be advanced by "confusing" the public with such facts. Nor do these shrill

voices ever ask what Teakettle Mountain looked like 10, 20 and 30 years ago. Again, it would not serve their interests to disclose that this area did not look basically different than it does today. As to animal life, the company has had the cattle population inspected by experts, who have reported no economic effects to be evident. With the help of a respected local veterinarian, a watchful eye is being maintained over local animals.

3. Comfort and convenience of the people. This is one policy area of the state law respecting which the company is keenly aware of the need for improvement. It should be stressed that the improvement being sought is to the aesthetic comfort of the local population, since physical discomfort is not charged by even the severest critic of the company as being a general affliction of the populace. Reduction of the haze which is magnified by frequent weather inversions is a major company goal. The haze is caused by hydrocarbons which are incompletely burned during operations, not by fluorides.

4. Economic and social development of Montana. To recite the facts and figures relating to the company's payroll, taxes paid, and the like, would surely set up a howl among those cynical critics to whose distorted way of reasoning these matters are irrelevant, and who hope the voices of reason will be drowned

out by repeated chants of the war cry, "Air Pollution!" Of course, to anyone not wearing emotional blinders employment for 1000 people is not irrelevant, in Montana or elsewhere, and the state law recognizes that fact.

5. Natural attractions. People living outside the area who read gloomy reports or dire predictions regarding Glacier National Park will be pleasantly surprised by a visit to the Park. The company through its own surveys knows that claims of devastation are only that -- claims. The boundary of the Park is some nine miles from the company's plant. The traces of fluoride markings which have been reported on trees east of Teakettle Mountain are located between the plant and the Park, and are miles from roads and trails ordinarily used by visitors.

6. Balancing of values. The public, after it assesses the policy points above, and acting through its elected and appointed officials (and not through self-appointed vigilantes), will have to determine where to strike a balance in the Columbia Falls situation.

One of the factors which will, and should, influence the public's final decision in this matter is the company's "track record". What time, effort and money has it devoted to the problem since 1955? What about the past year? What is the problem?

What will it cost to solve it? All legitimate questions.

Firstly, anyone not new to Montana knows that the aluminum reduction plant didn't start last month or last year, but in 1955. Since then, in excess of \$_____ have been spent in installing and maintaining an air control system. In addition to this amount, the company has expended some \$200,000 in the past year in engineering studies, retention of consultants, running of tests, and related efforts, in an attempt to minimize the rate of emissions. Other aluminum companies have been consulted, although they can be of minimal value since the design of the Columbia Falls plant is somewhat unique in the U.S., there being only two plants of roughly similar design and operating characteristics.

600 similar reduction cells or "pots" comprise the basic operation, requiring an air flow of _____ cubic feet each minute to maintain desirable operating conditions. Control, collection and cleaning of this massive air flow -- similar to controlling each minute the air breathed by _____ million people -- is the heart of the problem. Mr. Wake is unhappily all too accurate when he says that the complexity and immensity of the technical problems at Columbia Falls make their solution 1000 times harder than the Garrison situation. Where the Garrison

problem reportedly required around \$100,000 to solve, estimates of costs of possible alternatives at Columbia Falls -- none of which at present guarantee a solution -- run as high as \$26,000,000. Although critics of any and all air pollution can afford the luxury -- which costs them nothing -- of ignoring the economic realities of a particular problem, the industry which directly, and the general public which indirectly, must pay the price involved must of necessity consider these economic realities.

The company's first appeal to the general public is to weigh carefully extreme statements and charges which are all too often being made today, and to question whether motivations such as selling newspapers or seeing one's name in print may not be involved in some or all such statements. The second appeal is to allow those appointed to consider existing problems, including the Advisory Council, the Board of Health and Mr. Wake and his staff, an opportunity to become more familiar with the complex fact situation at Columbia Falls and to decide on the best way to apply existing law to the circumstances.

The company all too unhappily confesses that it does not today have an answer to the problem at Columbia Falls. It promises that as soon as such answer is found, it will be applied.

To those to whom all profit-motivated enterprise will always be suspect, neither this nor any other statement other than an announcement of the shutting down of operations will ever be acceptable. We do not believe that this cynical position reflects the thinking of the vast majority of Montanans. We hope we will not be proven wrong.